15.0.8
5665
1853
H-F

FROM
THE CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY
14 BEACON STREET
BOSTON, MASS.

WOMAN'S RIGHT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. MISS ANTOINETTE L. BROWN,

AT

SOUTH BUTLER, WAYNE COUNTY, N. Y., SEPT. 15, 1853.

BY REV. LUTHER LEE.

"Help those women which labored with me in the gospel."—PAUL.

SYRACUSE, N. Y.:
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.
60 South Salina Street.

1853.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Congregational Library of the American Congregational Association

http://archive.org/details/womansrighttopre00leel

WOMAN'S RIGHT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. MISS ANTOINETTE L. BROWN,

AT

SOUTH BUTLER, WAYNE COUNTY, N. Y., SEPT. 15, 1853.

BY REV. LUTHER LEE.

"Help those women which labored with me in the gospel."—PAUL.

SYRACUSE, N. Y.:
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.
60 South Salina Street.

1853.

SERMON.

" There is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—Gal. iii. 28.

The thinking portion of the assembly have, by this time, reasoned within themselves, " that is a singular text from which to preach an Ordination sermon." This may render it proper for me to remind my hearers, just at this point, that the text is no more unusual, as the basis of an Ordination sermon, than the occasion is unusual, upon which I am called to preach it.

The ordination of a female, or the setting apart of a female to the work of the Christian ministry, is, to say the least, a novel transaction, in this land and age. It cannot fail to call forth many remarks, and will, no doubt, provoke many censures.

For myself, I regard it in the light of a great innovation upon the opinions, prejudices and practices of nearly the whole Christian world. There have been some Christian communities who have allowed females to preach the gospel, but so far as I know, they have not ordained their ministers, male or female, or by any solemn form or service, set them apart to the work of the ministry, as I suppose is intended to be done at the conclusion of this discourse.

It is to be presumed that the parties concerned in this transaction, believe their course to be right, and that they have their reasons for so believing ; and I feel assured that there can be no time nor place more appropriate for an exhibition of such reasons, than the time and place of the transaction, which breaks in upon long established opinions and usages. And as I have been called upon to deliver the discourse on the occasion, I should deem it out of place, tame and cowardly, for me to deliver an ordinary sermon setting forth the duties and responsibilities of a Christian minister, without taking hold of the peculiarity of the occasion, and vindicating the innovation which we this hour make upon the usages of the Christian world.

It is with these views, and under these impressions that I have selected the text which I have read as the basis of my discourse. "There is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

What does this text mean? and what was the Apostle's design in uttering these words? Whatever the text means, or does not mean, its application is to be limited to what is clearly and specifically Christian. It is in Christ Jesus that there is no difference, and that the sex become one. There may be differences of rights and positions growing out of incidental relations, and conventional rules and usages, in matters which do not affect the fundamental rights of humanity, which I need not discuss ; but when we come to consider those rights and privileges, which we claim as Christians, and which belong to us as believers in Christ, there is no difference, we are all one in Christ Jesus. Without even presuming to discuss, on this occasion, the questions of civil and political rights, the text amply sustains me in affirming that in a Christian community, united upon Christian principles, for Christian purposes ; or, in other words, in the Church, of which Christ is the only head, males and females possess equal rights and privileges ; here there is no difference, "there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." I cannot see how the text can be explained so as to exclude females from any right, office, work, privilege, or immunity which males enjoy, hold or perform. If the text means anything, it means that males and females are equal in rights, privileges and responsibilities upon the Christian platform. I am very frank to confess that I had never very thoroughly investigated the question, until called upon to preach on this occasion, though I have held an opinion loosely on the subject for many years. This call, in my own estimation laid me under obligation to do one of two things, either step forward and assist this church, or decline so to do, for good and satisfactory reasons. I might have evaded the question, by declining for want of time, or some other fictitious reason, but that would not only have been in bad keeping with my general character, but would have been false to Christianity and my brethren. If those inviting me here are right in proposing to ordain a female to the Gospel ministry, they needed my help, and were entitled to it ; if they were wrong, they needed my reproof and reasons for it, and it was due to my own fidelity, and to truth, that I should administer it. But to do either, required thought beyond what I had ever bestowed upon the subject. You may then suppose me to have asked myself, "If I decline, what reason can I give for so doing? So far as I know there is no want of moral,

or mental or educational qualification on the part of the candidate ; if it be right to ordain any female, it is right to ordain this female." At this point, the text which I have selected for the occasion, presented itself to my mind, and I reasoned thus :—"I acknowledge the candidate to be in Christ, to be with me a sister in Christ ; if I deny her the right to exercise her gifts as a Christian minister, I virtually affirm that there is male and female, and that we are not all one in Christ Jesus, by which I shall contradict St. Paul, and though he is not among us to reply to me, to know myself at variance with him, would give me more uneasiness than to differ from modern doctors of divinity, and divinity schools. I am then brought to this conclusion, which I will state in the form of a proposition as the sequence of the text.

FEMALES HAVE A GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

I take it upon myself, as my portion of the effort on this occasion, to defend and substantiate the above proposition. To make any distinction in the church of Jesus Christ, between males and females, purely on the ground of sex, is virtually to strike this text from the sacred volume, for it affirms that in Christ there is no difference between males and females, that they are all one in regard to the gospel of the grace of God. If males may belong to a Christian church, so may females ; if male members may vote in the church, so may females ; if males may preach the gospel, so may females ; and if males may receive ordination by the imposition of hands, or otherwise, so may females, the reason of which is found in my text ; "there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

But it will be asked, why this sense of the text has not been discovered before, why has it lain hid until this hour ? I answer, it has been discovered and understood, but not practically applied, as has been the case with a great many other truths. Dr. Clarke concludes his comment upon the text in these words. "Under the blessed spirit of Christianity, they have equal *rights*, equal *privileges*, and equal *blessings ;* and let me add, they are equally *useful*."

This goes as far as I have gone. But Dr. Clarke was a Methodist, and may be suspected of having been influenced by the usages of his sect or denomination, by which females have been allowed to exercise their gifts in social meetings, composed of both sex. Well, then, hear what a Scotch Presbyterian Divine says on the text. Dr. McKnight gives the following comment :

"In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of persons, as under the

law : under the gospel no Jew is superior to a Greek, neither are slaves inferior to free men, nor are males preferred to females, for ye are all one, in respect to dignity and privileges under the gospel dispensation." "Under the law males had greater privileges than females. For males alone bore in their bodies the sign of God's covenant ; they alone were capable of the priesthood."

Whether Dr. McKnight designed it or not, he has affirmed, by the most clear and certain implication, that females may be priests or ministers under the gospel. And remember that I am not responsible for his inconsistency in having advocated the opposite opinion in other places, which he has done. Just let me read the two clauses, reversing the order, and see by what logical necessity the mind will be carried to the conclusion that females have an equal right to the Christian ministry with males. The Dr. says, " Under the law males had greater privileges than females. For males alone were capable of the priesthood. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of persons as under the law, males are not preferred before females, for ye are all one, in respect to dignity and privileges under the gospel dispensation." It is clear then that I have the authority of Dr. McKnight for my construction of the text. And any construction which will make it mean less than I suppose it means, must make it mean nothing.

The general design and scope of the apostle's reasoning, greatly strengthens the view I have taken of the text. The design was to counteract certain Judaizing teachers, and show that Christians were not bound to observe the law of Moses, that the Gentiles need not be circumcised and observe other Jewish rites To accomplish this he shows that the law is abrogated. Now the law made distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, and between males and females, excluding females from the priesthood, and laid them under other disabilities, and the apostle comes to the conclusion that under the gospel, there is neither Jew nor Greek, that is Gentile, neither male nor female, but that all are one in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle clearly designs to say that females are exempt, under the gospel, from the disabilities imposed by the law, and that they enjoy equal rights with men. There is clearly an extension of their rights and privileges under the gospel, and if so, how far does such extension reach ? The text fixes no limits, prescribes no bounds, names no places, occasions, subjects or duties, but affirms in general and unqualified terms, that there is neither male nor female, but that all are one in Christ Jesus, and this is done by way of proclaiming the abro-

gation of the Mosaic law, and it of necessity places males and females upon an equal platform of rights under the gospel.

The declaration concerning males and females, is just as full and unqualified as it is concerning Jews and Gentiles, and if it does not place males and females upon an equality, it may be argued with equal force that it does not place Jews and Gentiles on an equal footing. Having said what I judge to be necessary by way of explaining my text, and bringing out its meaning and force, I will proceed further to confirm the doctrine arrived at by other considerations.

1. There were female prophets under the Old Dispensation. "And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dance. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." Exo. xv. 20, 21.

"And Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time." Judges iv. 4.

Thus have we an account of two female prophets, and one of them judged Israel; yes, a female was both prophet and judge.

I will now call your attention to a more remarkable case. During the reign of King Josiah, the book of the law was found, which appears to have been lost, and it was read before the king, and on hearing the law, the king become alarmed, and commanded his principal officers to go and inquire of the Lord for him, and for all the people, concerning the words of the book that was found. Now to whom did they go to inquire of God? We have the rest of the history as follows:

"So Hikiah the priest, and Ahikam and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest

what I spake against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and has rent thy clothes, and wept before me ; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace ; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again." 2 Kings xxii. 14–20. See also 2 Chron. xxxiv.

This woman, Huldah, was undeniably a public religious teacher, according to the usages of the times in which she lived. She spake for God, in his name, and by his authority, and her words are recorded in the book. "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Azer." Luke ii. 36.

Of this woman and her public labors we have no account, only that she preached publicly in the temple concerning Christ, when he was brought there, an infant in his mother's arms, to be presented to the Lord. The fact that she recognized the Saviour, and spake of him as she did, proves that she was endowed with the extraordinary gifts of a prophet.

This case, though recorded in the New Testament, occurred under the Old Dispensation, where I have classed it. There were other cases of less note, as Nehemiah mentions a prophetess that discouraged him in his work. vi. 14.

Isaiah appears to have had a prophetess for his wife. Chap. viii. 3.

So common a thing was it to have female prophets, that the propagaters of error judged it an object to counterfeit the usage, and hence there were false female prophets, as well as false male prophets. God said to his true prophet, Ezekiel, "Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own hearts, and prophesy thou against them." xiii. 16.

This proves beyond a doubt, that it must have been common for females to have the true spirit of prophesy, or there would not have been false pretenders. There is never a counterfeit, without a genuine ; and had it not been believed and understood that God did call females to the office and work of prophets, the fact of a female pretending to prophesy in the name of God, would have proved her false. The fact therefore, that there were false female prophets, furnishes strong evidence, not only that there were genuine female prophets, but that they must have been common ; sufficiently so, at least, as not to create suspicion upon its face when one appeared.

2. There were prophetesses or female prophets in the Primitive Church

under the gospel. The fact that there would be, was foretold by the Prophet Joel. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Joel. ii. 28.

This text most clearly began to be fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, as we learn from Acts ii. 17 ; where Peter declares the development of that day, to be what was foretold by the prophet. But how was the prediction, that daughters should prophesy fulfilled on the day of Pentecost? The history of the subject answers this question. It is as follows :

In the first chapter, we are told who constituted the assembled Christians. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Verses 12–14.

Here we have named the eleven apostles, then "the women," then Mary the mother of Jesus in particular, and lastly "his brethren." By his brethren is probably meant his near relatives. It is probable that there were a number of women in the company, as they are mentioned as forming one portion of the assembly. In the 15th verse we are told that the whole number present was about one hundred and twenty persons. In the fourth verse of chapter two, we are told that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues.

Who were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues? Most clearly the hundred and twenty persons, consisting of the apostles, the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren. To deny this would be to falsify the plainest portion of the record. The record declares that there were about one hundred and twenty persons assembled together, that this number embraced the women, and that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues. Thus did the Holy Ghost, in his first descent, crown females as well as males, with tongues of fire, to speak the wonderful works of God.

But the remarkable prophesy of Joel did not receive its entire fulfillment on the day of Pentecost, for about twenty-seven years afterwards

we read, Acts xxi. 9, that Phillip of Cesarea, "had four daughters which did prophesy." As this fact is mentioned only incidentally, and not as a new or strange thing, it appears probable that female prophets were not unusual in the Primitive Church.

This is the proper place to remark that prophesying is not to be understood in the restricted sense of foretelling. A prophet is not exclusively one who foretels, but who explains prophesies, and teaches; and to prophesy is to explain prophesies and to teach. In this sense every gospel minister is a prophet, and every prophet under the new dispensation is a gospel minister. Here then were four female gospel ministers, daughters of one man. When it is said, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," the meaning is, your sons and your daughters shall become teachers, or gospel ministers.

The Greek word which we translate prophet, is *propheetuo*, and signifies "to foretell, to predict, to explain and apply prophesies." To explain and apply prophesies, was the peculiar work of the first ministers. The Greek word which we translate prophet, is *propheetees*, and signifies "a declarer, a foreteller, a priest, a teacher, an instructor." It was always the work of prophets to labor as religious teachers, and to explain and apply the predictions which had been previously uttered by others, and when we consider that there were whole schools of prophets, we may conclude that but few of the whole number were employed to foretell, and that their principal calling was to labor as religious teachers. That prophets were preachers or religious teachers, is perfectly clear from the use of the words, prophet and prophesy, by the apostles.

The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem for the settlement of the great question, whether Gentile converts were bound to keep the law of Moses concerning circumcision and other rites. The apostles and the church at Jerusalem, having considered the case, sent back a written answer, and sent also two messengers of their own company, Judas and Silas. "And Judas and Silas being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them." This proves beyond a doubt, that they exhorted, or preached in the common acceptation, by virtue of their prophetic office, and the conclusion is that to be a prophet, is to be a preacher, or public religious teacher. We read again, 1 Cor. xix. 3: "He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort." Here the entire pulpit work of a gospel preacher is described as the act of prophesying, which renders it certain that prophets were preachers.

Again, we read Rev. ii. 20, "Nevertheless, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jazebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach, and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things offered to idols." This proves two points; first, that the doctrine must have prevailed that women might rightfully be prophets; and secondly, that being prophets, they taught the people. The complaint is not that she was a *woman*, but that she was a bad woman; not that she was a *prophetess*, but that she called herself one when she was not; not that she *taught*, but that she taught false and corrupting doctrine. It is clear that there would have been no false female teachers, had there been no true ones, and that a false female teacher could not have been sustained in the church, had the doctrine prevailed that the gospel forbade females to preach the gospel.

I have now proved that there were a class of females in the Primitive Church called prophetesses, that is, there were female prophets, and these prophets were preachers or public teachers of religion. Here I rest this branch of my argument, and will proceed to introduce another branch of evidence.

3. There were female preachers of the gospel in the primitive church, and some cases in which it appears that females occupied the official relation of minister, or religious teacher, to particular congregations. If this position can be sustained, the whole controversy will be settled, and there is one text, so clear and full on the subject, that I would not fear to rest the whole argument on that alone. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans, chapter xvi. 1: "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." The words, "servant of the church," clearly express an official relation. The churches had no servants but officers, and what office did Phebe fill, if not that of preacher, teacher or minister?

The translation obscures the sense, which will became plain by an examination of other texts where the same word occurs in the original. The Greek word here rendered servant, is *diakonos*. This word occurs just thirty times in the New Testament. In two instances it is translated servant, where it means a common house servant or waiter. John ii. 5, 9: "His mother said unto the servants," &c. "But the servants which drew the water knew." Here the word is applied to the waiters at a marriage feast. In three instances the word is applied to civil officers. Once by Christ, Matt. xxii. 13: "Then said the king unto his *servants*, bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast

him into outer darkness." Here it is rendered *servant*, but clearly means an officer of the king.

Paul uses the word twice in the same sense, Rom. xiii. 3, 4 : "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. For he is the *minister* of God to thee for good—for he is the *minister* of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Here the same word is twice translated *minister*, and it clearly means a civil ruler or judicial officer. Once it is translated servant, where it means any christian or follower of Christ. John xii. 26 : "Where I am, there shall also my *servant* be." Twice the word is applied to Christ, and is translated *minister*. Rom. xv. 8 : "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a *minister* of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Gal. ii. 17 : "But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the *minister* of sin." In two other texts it is translated servant, where its meaning may be a little doubtful. Matt. xxii. 11 : "But he that is greatest among you shall be your *servant*." This I think clearly means minister, but it is not important. Mark ix. 35 : "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and *servant* of all." Servant here may mean simply an inferior position, and the text may be a maxim, that ambition will generally defeat itself.

I have now disposed of ten of the thirty texts in which the word *diakonos* occurs, which is rendered servant when applied to Phebe. This leaves twenty other instances of the use of the word, in the Greek Testament, in every one of which it clearly and unequivocally means a minister of the gospel, or religious teacher of some grade. In one case it is applied to false ministers. 2 Cor. xi 15 : "It is no great thing if his (Satan's) *ministers* are transformed into an angel of light." In every other case the word is used to express a true minister of the gospel, or teacher of some grade. In three cases it is rendered Deacon, and clearly means a church officer. The texts are Philip. i. 1 : "Paul and Timotheus to all the saints which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12 : "Likewise must the deacons be grave." "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own house well." We will not pause here to dispute about what the office of a deacon was, for the word rendered deacon, is so rendered only three times out of thirty.

I have now disposed of four other texts of the thirty, leaving sixteen, and in every one of these the word is translated *minister*. I need not quote all these texts, but will refer to a few of them as specimens.

Matt. xx. 26 : "But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your *minister*."

1 Cor. iii. 5 : "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but *ministers* by whom ye believed?"

2 Cor. iii. 6 : "Who also hath made us able *ministers* of the New Testament." Chap. vi. 4 : "But in all things approving ourselves as the *ministers* of God."

Eph. iii. 7 : "Whereof I was made a *minister*, according to the gift of the grace of God."

Chap. vi. 21 : "Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful *minister* in the Lord."

Col. i. 23 : "Whereof I Paul am made a *minister*."

1 Thes. iii. 2 : "Timotheus, our brother and *minister* of God."

The above texts are sufficient, the remaining ones are just like them. Here it is seen that the same word which Paul applied to Phebe, to describe her official relation to the church at Cenchrea, is the word which the same writer generally used to denote a minister of the gospel. Take another view of the matter. Out of the thirty instances of the use of the word in the Greek Testament, twenty two of them are in the language of Paul. Note, Paul uses a word twenty two times, and in eighteen cases out of the twenty two, the translators have rendered it *minister* ; in three they have rendered it *deacon*, and in the one remaining case they have rendered it *servant*, and that is where it is applied to Phebe. Poor Phebe is made a single exception out of twenty two instances of the use of the word. In eighteen cases it means a *minister*, in three it means a *deacon*, and in one only, where it is applied to a female, it means a *servant*. The translators could not even allow her the subordinate honor of being a deaconess, but because she was a woman, she must be a servant, though Paul, whose language they thus translated, had declared that there is neither male nor female, but that all are one in Christ Jesus. Had it been a man of whom Paul thus wrote, there is not a shadow of doubt that they would have rendered it, "the *minister* of the church which is at Cenchrea." We see then if we conform the translation to the almost undeviating course of the translators, we shall make it read, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a *minister* of the Church which is at Cenchrea," and so reading as it ought to read, the question of a woman's right to preach the gospel is settled.

But it does not depend upon this one text alone, but I have pushed the argument far enough in this direction, and will only glance at a few

texts which speak of female laborers. After commending Phebe, the minister of the Church at Cenchrea, Paul proceeds to name other worthy persons, among whom are a number of females. "Great Priscilla and Aquilla, my helpers in Christ Jesus." Priscilla was a woman, the wife of Aquilla, and they were Paul's helpers in Christ. "Salute Tryphena and Tryposa who labor in the Lord." These were two females, and they labored in the Lord.

"Salute the beloved Persis which labored much in the Lord." Persis was another female laborer, and she labored much in the Lord. Paul says, Phil. iv. 3., "Help those women that labored with me in the gospel." If it were now said of any persons, that they labor in the gospel, it would be understood that they preach the gospel, and it is clear that Paul labored in connection with females, who preached the gospel of the grace of God.

It is a fact worthy of mention in this connection, that women were the first persons employed by Christ, after his resurrection, to tell the story of his triumph over death and the grave. They were last to forsake him when his enemies triumphed, first to visit his grave amid the gray dawn of the first morn after the Sabbath was past ; and first to go and tell the glad news of his resurrection, for they "did run to bring his disciples word ;" and yet the men were so far behind them in faith and feeling, as to regard their words of love and joy as an idle tale.

4. All antiquity agrees that there were female officers and teachers in the Primitive Church, the only dispute being about what their functions were, and by what title they were known. The fact is universally admitted that they were appointed to the office of deaconess, that is, there were female deacons. It would be improper to attempt extended extracts. I will therefore only refer to a few authorities. In Calmet's dictionary, under the word deaconess, it is said "They were in the Primitive Church, appointed to this office, with the imposition of hands." These persons appear to be the same as those whom Pliny, in his famous letter to Trajan, styles "*Ancillis quae ministrae dicebantur*," female attendants called assistants, ministers or servants. It appears then, that these were customary officers throughout the churches; and when the fury of persecution fell on Christians, these were among the first to suffer." See Robinson's Calmet.

Here we have not only the authority of Calmet, but that of Pliny also, who was a Roman Consul, and sometime governor of Bithynia where he checked the persecution against the Christians. His letter

to Trojan the Emperor, above alluded to, was written with a design to check the persecution, in which he succeeded.

The same essential facts may be found copied into Watson's Dictionary. *Article Deacon.*

In Buck's Theological Dictionary, *Article Deaconess*, it is said "the apostolic constitutions, as they are called, mention the ordination of a deaconess, and the form of prayer used on that occasion," and refers to Lib. viii. Chap. 9. 20.

Dr. Adam Clarke says, "It is evident that they were ordained to their office by the imposition of the hands of the bishop ; and the form of the prayer used on the occasion is extant in the apostolic constitutions. In the tenth or eleventh century the order was suppressed in the Latin Church, but continued in the Greek Church till the end of the twelfth century. Clarke's Com. Rom. xvi. 1. Dr. Clarke refers to Broughton's Dictionary. Article Deaconess.

This discourse would be defective, should I not pay some attention to those scriptures which some suppose forbade females to exercise their gifts in public. There are, so far as I know, but two texts, that are, or can be relied upon as proof against the right of females to improve in public. They are as follows :

"Let your women keep silence in the churches : for it is not permitted unto them to speak ; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home : for it is a shame for woman to speak in the church." 1. Cor. xiv 34, 35.

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

These two texts, I believe, are all the proof there is to offset the array of texts and arguments which have been adduced in proof of the right of females to preach the gospel. If I were to say, "I do not know what they mean," they could never disprove the fact that females did prophesy and pray in the church, and if explained at all, they must be so explained as to harmonize with that fact. Let us then examine the matter.

If these texts are to be understood as a general prohibition of the improvement of female gifts in public, it must be entire and absolute, and must cut females off from all vocal part in public worship. It will preclude them from singing and vocal prayer. The expression,

"Let your women keep silence in the churches," if it touches the case at all, forbids singing and vocal prayer. Can a woman sing and keep silence at the same time? Can she pray vocally, and keep silence at the same time? Such then is the true issue, and as we must meet the issue before the people, it is important that it be presented to them in its true light. Singing is as much a violation of the command to keep silence as praying or preaching. We must then put locks upon the lips of the sisterhood in time of prayer, and compel them to let their harps hang in silence while we, the lords of creation, chant Zion's songs, and leave the song itself devoid of the softer melodies which flow from woman's soul.

Such a construction of these texts most clearly makes them conflict with other portions of divine truth. Glance for a moment at the weight of evidence on the other side. My text affirms, as a broad foundation on which to stand, "There is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Miriam was a prophetess and led the host of women in Israel forth, and when the men sung of Jehovah's triumph, she responded loudly and gloriously in the face of all Israel. Deborah was a prophetess and was a judge of all Israel. Huldah was a prophetess, and dwelt in the College at Jerusalem, and prophesied in the name of the Lord, to king Josiah. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." Anna prophesied concerning Christ in the temple to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. The prophet Joel foretold that daughters should prophesy under the New Dispensation; and God did pour out his Spirit on females and they spake with other tongues. Philip "had four daughters which did prophesy," sixty years after the birth of Christ. Paul the author of this supposed law of silence imposed upon females, tells us that Phebe was a deaconess or minister of the Church which was at Cenchrea; and commends several other females in the same chapter, who labored in the Lord. Paul also wrote to the church at Philippi, and told them to "help those women that labored in the gospel." And all antiquity agrees that women were set apart to some church office by the imposition of a bishop's hands.

Now, in the face of all this, are we to understand Paul as issuing a command, covering all countries and all ages, absolutely requiring all women to keep silence in the churches, and not to speak a word within the walls of the sanctuary? Those must believe it who can, but I cannot believe it with the light I now have, and must seek some ex-

planation, which will, in my view, make a better harmony in the word of God.

Every writer should be so construed, if it be possible, as to make him agree with himself, and to do this, Paul must be so understood in these two texts, as to make the sense accord with what he has so plainly taught in other places, that females might and did exercise their gifts in public. Compare with 1 Cor. xi. 5, 6, 13, 14, 15.

"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head ; for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn : but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. Judge in yourselves : is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him ? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her : for her hair is given her for a coverng."

Here the apostle most clearly gives directions how women are to pray and prophesy in public, and are we to understand him as first giving directions how females should pray and prophesy, and then in the same letter, absolutely forbid the thing he had given directions how to perform ? I cannot believe this, and must seek another exposition. It is clear that women did pray and prophesy in that church, and the apostle told them it must be done with their heads covered, that is wearing the customary veil. This was founded upon the customs of the times, to which it was necessary to conform in order to success, as to appear in public without a veil, in that community, subjected a female to suspicions of a want of virtue. What the apostle calls nature, was only the prejudice of education, which has now ceased to exist, or rather never existed among us. The Greek word, *phusis*, here translated *nature*, signifies not only nature, but "constitution, disposition, character, custom, habit, use." We have no such nature in this country, and as the rule grew out of the then existing customs and prejudices of soiciety, it is no longer binding, and females may appear with or without veils as may suit their taste or convenience. But the point is, that as Paul gives instructions for women to pray and prophesy with their heads covered, he cannot be understood as forbiding them to pray and prophesy under any and all circumstances. But what does the apostle mean when he says it is not permitted for women to speak ?

It is certain that he does not speak of female teachers or preachers, as such, for he comprehends the entire membership of the church. The twenty-third verse says, " If therefore the whole church be come

together nto some place, and all speak with tongues," &c. This proves that the apostle is not treating of teachers as officers, as a distinct class, nor of the eligibility of persons to the office or teacher, as distinguished from the membership generally, but of the duties, rights and privileges of the membership in common, as members. If, therefore, the text precludes women from speaking in the church as a general rule, it precludes them, not merely as authorized teachers, but from the right of speaking as common or unofficial members of the church.

In view of the numerous and unanswerable proofs that God did employ females, under the Old and New Covenants, as public instrumentalities of spreading truth, all who hold the doctrine of the absolute equality of males and females, under all circumstances, and in all relations, will as a matter of course, regard these two texts as local and specific in their application, founded upon some peculiarity in the circumstances of the community at that time and in those places, and as having no general bearing on the question. It will be much easier for them to believe that there were circumstances, which were then understood, calling for such a rule, thus specific and local in its bearing, and constituting an exception to the general rule, that women had a right to, and did prophesy ; than to believe that the facts that they did teach, scattered, as they are, through a period of more than fifteen centuries, are proved by these two texts to be the exceptions to, and in violation of, a positive law of God, the foundation of which he has laid in nature. The simple admission of such numerous and wide spread exceptions to what is claimed to the law of God, having its foundation in nature, must come but little short of nullification For the benefit of those who hold as above, no further exposition is necessary. But as many conscientiously believe that the Scriptures teach that women are to be subordinate, especially to their husbands, it is proper to show that the texts will admit of an exposition which will hormonize their views with woman's right to preach the gospel. This I will now undertake.

The rule whatever it means, is based upon some law, which must have been known and understood by the Corinthian church. The clause reads thus :—" It is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." It is worthy of remark that the words, " they are commanded" are not in the original text, but were added by the translators, to make plain what they supposed to be the sense. Without these words it reads, " Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not

permitted unto them to speak, but to be under obedience as also saith the law." Supplying the ellipses in brackets, it reads, "It is not permitted unto them to speak [in the church] but to be under obedience as also saith the law."

From this aspect of the text it is clear, first that speaking is the antithesis of being under obedience, and that being under obedience, is the thing required by some law at the time known to the parties. "As also saith the law," is an appeal to the law, which proves that whatever the apostle commanded in this matter, it was only a reiteration of the sense of the law which already existed. To what law then does the apostle appeal? If we can decide this, it will determine the sense of the text.

I say then it cannot be any of the statute laws of Moses, for two reasons. First, no such law can be found, and secondly, if it existed, it must have been violated under divine sanction, by the existence of female teachers and rulers, as Miriam, Deborah and Huldah. If it was only some law of the Sanhedrim, or some law regulating Jewish Synagogues, it cannot be binding now, though Paul might have thought best to conform christian assemblies to Jewish Synagogues in some particulars at that time. But I do not say that it is any such law that is referred to in the text.

The universal opinion, so far as I know, is that the law referred to is, Gen. iii. 16: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This is the reference made in all our reference Bibles. It is the opinion of Dr. Clarke, who held that women might speak in public. Dr. McKnight, who was an opposer of women's right to preach the gospel, supposes that the apostle refers to Genesis as the law in question. Scott is of the same opinion. Barnes, who is one of the most strenuous opposers of female improvements in public, holds the same view, and so far as I know, no person has ever expressed any other opinion. So far then as those are concerned who insist that the apostle forbids women to speak in the church, as a general rule, I may regard it as settled that when the apostle appeals to the law as teaching the doctrine of woman's obligation to be silent, he refers to the words addressed to the mother of us all, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." As the apostle appeals to this, as expressing the same thing which he teaches, in it we must find the sense of the text in question. By this I am willing to abide, if those who have given this exposition will do the same.

Now, allowing that the above is the law referred to, two consequences must follow, fatal to the argument for female silence.

1. The law is binding only upon married women. As it is to their husbands that they are to be under obedience, the obedience can be required of none but such as have husbands. This must leave all unmarried females and widows free from the law of silence.

2. The law imposes silence on married women, only in obedience to the will of their husbands. If a woman has a husband who not only approves of her speaking in public, but who requests her so to do, her public improvement will be no violation of the law, but rather a compliance with its demand. The text already quoted from 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12, is in perfect harmony with the above exposition. It says, "Let the women learn in silence, with all submission." This explained by the same law, must mean submission to their husbands. But the apostle adds, "I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp authority over the man." By "*the* man," a woman's husband must be meant, and keeping the same law before our eyes, she is forbidden to teach contrary to the wishes or command of her husband, by which she would seem to usurp authority over him, in violation of the law referred to, which says, "thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee."

This view is greatly strengthened by the fact that it was disorderly and contentious proceedings that the apostle was laboring to correct, and not a wrong proceeding, conducted with due solemnity and order. This will appear by reading the whole connection, as follows :

"How is it then, brethren ? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course ; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church ; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the church ; for it is not permitted unto them to speak : but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also

saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home ; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

There was most obviously disorder and confusion, in consequence of all wishing to speak at the same time, and each wishing to advance different and conflicting views. It is also most clearly inferable that the women took part in these disorderly proceedings, and talked in opposition to their husbands, and questioned them and others on the disputed points, by which husbands and wives became opponents, increasing the confusion, and destroying the harmony of the church. The application of the law given to our mother Eve, specifically made by the apostle to this case, is proof positive that there must have been a violation of the law, by the insubordination of wives to their husbands in those disorderly meetings, as I have supposed above. If then the difficulty arose in part from conflicting movements of husbands and wives in the church, there was no way to cure the evil, by a specific direction, but to command the men or the women to keep silence, and the apostle did the latter, appealing to the law as a reason which says, "Thy desires shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Thus is it seen that the apostle's injunction was not given as a general rule, but as a remedy for a specific difficulty, and to construe it against the public efforts of competent and orderly female teachers, in the face of all the unanswerable proof that females did teach under divine sanction, is in my view, doing violence to the word of God.

This is still further supported by the doctrine of true expediency and utility. The females in the Corrinthian church, I presume were not divinely inspired, or church-appointed teachers, but common members, and perhaps recent converts from heathenism, ignorant and incompetent to teach. Such surely should keep silence, and ask their husbands at home. But suppose a woman to be ever so well qualified, intellectually and morally,—and a woman by study and prayer, may know as much of God, and divinity, and the plan of salvation, as a man,—if she has a husband, it would be a matter of very questionable expediency and utility, for her to undertake to preach the gospel, without the consent and in violation of the commands of her husband, even if there were no precept on the subject. But it has been seen that such females as have no husbands, of whom Paul says she "careth for the things of the Lord," and such as have husbands, who approve of their public efforts to persuade sinners to repent and be saved, are not estopped by the law upon which Paul bases his directions, that the

women keep silence in the churches, even as understood by those who so contrue the apostle's words. Here I rest my argument, and will proceed to close this already too long discourse.

We are here assembled on a very interesting and solemn occasion, and it is proper to advert to the real object for which we have come together. There are in the world, and there may be among us, false views of the nature and object of ordination. I do not believe that any special or specific form of ordination is necessary to constitute a gospel minister. We are not here to make a minister. It is not to confer on this our sister, a right to preach the gospel. If she has not that right already, we have no power to communicate it to her. Nor have we met to qualify her for the work of the ministry If God and mental and moral culture have not already qualified her, we cannot, by anything we may do by way of ordaining or setting her apart. Nor can we, by imposition of our hands, confer on her any special grace for the work of the ministry, nor will our hands if imposed upon her head, serve as a special medium for the communication of the Holy Ghost, as conductors serve to convey electricity ; such ideas belong not to our theory, but are related to other systems and darker ages. All we are here to do, and all we expect to do, is, in due form, and by a solemn and impressive service, to subscribe our testimony to the fact, that in our belief, our sister in Christ, Antoinette L. Brown, is one of the ministers of the New Covenant, authorized, qualified, and called of God to preach the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. This is all, but this even renders the occasion interesting and solemn. As she is recognized as the pastor of this flock, it is solemn and interesting to both pastor and flock, to have the relation formally recognized. But as a special charge is to be given to both, by others, I forbear to open the subject of their mutual responsibilities, and will conclude by invoking the blessing of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost upon both preacher and people. Amen.